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TOWN PLANNING ADVISER.

The Government's Budget of 1920 contained a short but definite paragraph about Town Planning, which gave great promise of tangible results. It said :—

The important question of town planning is being considered. There are many beneficial clauses in land and local bodies' legislation at present on the Statute Book. These and other provisions will be embodied in a measure which will be introduced in the House. If the Bill cannot be put through in the present session it is proposed to appoint a town planning expert, whose services will be available to all local bodies and who will be able to advise upon the best and latest ideas in this important branch of local government.

Has this promise been forgotten? From what we hear the Government intends to seriously take up the matter. Town Planners may not get all they have asked for straight away, especially as the financial position will make any Government chary of creating new offices with substantial salaries, but there is something important under consideration which we hardly feel inclined to more fully discuss at the moment. What is proposed is not all we desire, but it will be a good start, and quite on the lines favoured by the New Zealand Town Planning Conference. The policy laid down by that Conference was to give a large, almost a complete measure of local control of the movement, the State contenting itself with furnishing impartial advice and expert assistance. There is such a grave objection to centralisation that we think the Town Planners and their friends the local administrators who attended the Conference were wise in their modifications of the Bill proposed by the Hon. G. W. Russell. But the necessary stimulus to action must come from a thoroughly competent town planner, who will bring his knowledge and insight to bear on local problems in such a way that his work will be welcomed by the local administrators, who will find in this impartial official the justification they need in asking authority from the ratepayers for expenditure.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS.

In another column we publish a letter from a correspondent signing himself "Once Bitten, Twice Shy," which we would commend to the attention of our architectural readers. The principal point raised by our correspondent causes us to reflect that a profession whose members are willing (and in some cases anxious) to publicly compete with each other for the mere chance of employment can never occupy as authoritative or distinguished a position as one whose counsel is directly sought from its members, according to their qualifications. We think the architectural profession is suffering the consequences of having too readily officially countenanced competitions as a means of selection. The benefit of personal consultation or co-operation with the persons or bodies that are to use the building when built tends to confirm the impression held by some sections of the public, that architects are primarily picture-makers, and that the owner's interests do not demand personal contact with the architect. While we are not disposed to go as far in condemnation of competitions as our correspondent, we believe the principle is being abused, and that architects are being exploited. What is wanted is close supervision by the Institute. That body, acting for the whole profession, should endeavour to induce the Government and other public authorities to take its advice in framing the conditions. The Institute should go even further. If the subject is one which ought not to be the basis of a competition, the Institute should veto the proposal, and prevent the profession from touching it except on the usual scale rates. Such a policy, wisely carried out, would stop attempts to get alternative designs for comparatively trivial works at a cost of next to nothing, but it would still leave the field open for national competition for worthy objects. So many young and rising architects have secured a big lift through important competitions that we believe these things, wisely directed, to be of value as a spur to effort and initiative. If competitions were abolished, the result would be a narrowing of the range of selection, possibly even the introduction of log-rolling to secure the choicest